

**Developing North Carolina's Capacity to Address Human Trafficking:
A Qualitative Process Evaluation**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Brief project overview. The problem of human trafficking is an increasing concern in North Carolina, with anecdotal evidence suggesting that all aspects of human trafficking are a growing problem in both rural and urban areas of the state (Jayson, 2013; Sullivan, 2010). In 2010, the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) awarded a grant to the North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NCCASA) to lead a multi-year effort aimed at developing statewide infrastructure to provide comprehensive services for pre-certified foreign national victims of human trafficking. The term *pre-certified* indicates that the foreign national adult victim of human trafficking has not yet been issued a Certification Letter from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or the Office of Refugee Resettlement. Certified victims of human trafficking are eligible to receive certain federal benefits and supports despite their undocumented immigration status. However, the certification process can be lengthy, and pre-certified victims of human trafficking are those most often in need of immediate help. Accordingly, pre-certified foreign national adult victim of human trafficking are among one of the most vulnerable groups of human trafficking victims because they cannot easily access all the resources and supports that are available to certified trafficking victims and victims who are U.S. citizens. In assessing North Carolina’s ability to address the needs of these human trafficking victims, NCCASA determined that the state lacked the infrastructure to accomplish the following critical tasks:

1. Adequately meet the immediate needs of victims of human trafficking once victims are identified;
2. Conduct trainings in victim-centered services for groups of service providers and professionals who are most likely to encounter trafficking victims in their work; and
3. Increase public awareness about the growing problem of human trafficking in North Carolina.

To address these critically important needs, NCCASA led a 3-year effort to develop a statewide coordinated response and to establish a state-level service system for pre-certified foreign national victims of human trafficking.

To accomplish these goals, NCCASA began by building on existing community and state resources. Specifically, NCCASA formed a statewide task force bringing together other key organizations involved with the issue of human trafficking. The task force members included the following organizations:

- Legal Aid of North Carolina;
- North Carolina Coalition Against Human Trafficking (NCCAHT);
- Pitt County Sheriff's Office; and
- Salvation Army of Wake County.

The task force was convened for the primary purpose of developing an infrastructure that would have the capacity to meet the statewide needs identified above. To accomplish this goal, the collaborative task force outlined a strategy with three specific steps:

1. Develop a comprehensive set of victim-centered services and provide those services to victims of human trafficking;
2. Create trainings for service providers and law enforcement professionals that provide these professional audiences with knowledge based on the best practices in working with victims of human trafficking; and
3. Enhance anti-trafficking awareness and collaborations throughout North Carolina communities.

To ensure a well-designed and rigorous evaluation of this project, the NCCASA staff collaborated with a team of researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) School of Social Work. The UNC research team sought to evaluate changes in North Carolina trafficking-response infrastructure related to NCCASA's efforts to help develop this infrastructure.

Brief summary of evaluation methods. The research team's primary aim was to evaluate changes in North Carolina's trafficking-response infrastructure that stemmed from NCCASA's efforts to develop a comprehensive and more responsive infrastructure. Specifically, this evaluation used a mid- and post-test qualitative research design

- to collect information about existing trafficking programs, protocols, and services available in North Carolina;
- to collect follow-up information about these trafficking programs, protocols, and services as they existed in North Carolina at the end of the project period; and
- to collect information about changes in these trafficking programs, protocols, and services that occurred during the project period.

Accordingly, this research sought to provide not only findings about the dynamic operations of the collaborative project but also information on lessons learned from this project.

To evaluate changes in North Carolina trafficking-response infrastructure, our team conducted an exploratory qualitative study that used a standardized protocol for open-ended focus groups, a standardized protocol for interviews, and a demographic survey that was developed for this study. Supplementary quantitative information was sought to provide descriptive data on participant demographics. Data was purposely collected at two time points to investigate changes in North Carolina statewide infrastructure over the course of the project. (See Figure 1 on page 23 of the report for the project and research timeline.) The first data collection point occurred at the project's mid-point, which was about 12 months after the project had begun initial assessments of program challenges, successes, and lessons-learned. The second data collection point was scheduled about 12 months after the first data collection, placing the second data wave near the end of the project period.

Before any data collection was begun, the methods for this study were reviewed and approved by the UNC Institutional Review Board (IRB). See Appendix A for the approved IRB application, and see Appendix B for all study materials (i.e., focus group/interview guide, recruitment materials, and survey instruments). After obtaining IRB approval, the research team sought and was approved for a Certificate of Confidentiality from Office for Victims of Crime (the project funder; See Appendix C for the approved application.)

Overall, 14 anti-trafficking advocates and service providers provided qualitative and quantitative data during focus group meetings or individual interviews. Twelve participants were involved in the first round of data collection (i.e., project mid-point); 10 participated in a focus group, and 2 participants completed individual interviews. At project completion, 11 participants took part in a second round of data collection. Most, but not all, participants took part in both rounds of data collection; however, 3 participants completed only the first round data collection, and 2 participants participated in only the second round data collection. Over the course of the two data collection points, the participants discussed North Carolina's statewide capacity to provide comprehensive services for human trafficking victims in general and specifically for pre-certified foreign national victims. These discussions focused on the system's strengths, challenges, and change over time, and possible solutions in moving forward to provide comprehensive services for human trafficking victims.

Brief summary of key evaluation findings. This evaluative, exploratory mid- and post-test qualitative research study of the NCCASA-led and OVC-funded project to develop a statewide infrastructure with the capacity to provide comprehensive services for pre-certified foreign national victims of human trafficking identified five key themes:

- limitations of current awareness and infrastructure;
- need for consistent, sustained funding;
- need for improved communication and collaboration among anti-human trafficking organizations and agencies

- improved availability and delivery of aftercare services to victims of human trafficking; and
- need for victim-centered criminal justice and legal services.

Notably, the research findings showed significant interrelationships among the five themes that can best be described as a kind of “chicken-or-egg” association. In particular, the findings showed the extent of how critically important statewide awareness and a statewide infrastructure are for responding to human trafficking in North Carolina. This research suggests that increasing the awareness about human trafficking among professionals, service providers, and the public not only facilitates the identification of human trafficking but also improves the effectiveness of responses to victims through availability of high-quality aftercare and legal services. Moreover, greater widespread awareness of human trafficking will facilitate appropriate and swift justice responses to human trafficking crimes. Similarly, increased awareness helps to generate funding for anti-human trafficking trainings, aftercare services, legal services, and criminal justice capacity to respond to human trafficking crimes. Thus, greater awareness and funding are both essential factors for the development of a robust, widely available human trafficking response infrastructure in North Carolina.

The findings also suggest the development of human trafficking training programs, aftercare services, legal services, and criminal justice capacity can likewise help build awareness and lead to additional funding. Accordingly, the findings suggest that seed funding and investment in initial resource development can lead to the further development of statewide human trafficking response capacity. For these reasons, and as the participants attested during this study, the NCCASA-led and the OVC-funded multi-year project to develop statewide infrastructure for comprehensive services for pre-certified foreign national victims of human trafficking showed many important successes.

Specific project successes identified as part of this research included

- greater level of public awareness of human trafficking
- development and implementation of high-quality case management services
- successful implementation of anti-human trafficking training for all entry-level law enforcement officers throughout the state
- improved interagency communication and collaboration

A further accomplishment is the statewide effort to implement introductory human trafficking training for professionals and service providers, so that these professionals and service providers are now ready for advanced training. That growing pool of professionals and service providers

with training and expertise in the area of human trafficking is a considerable and important asset for North Carolina.

Moreover, the research showed that by the end of the project, participants were developing long-term plans, finding creative solutions, and inventing novel strategies for advancing and growing North Carolina's capacity to respond to human trafficking. Participant recommendations for future actions included,

- changing legal jurisdictions and developing relationships with relevant federal agencies to allow for legal pursuit of traffickers across jurisdictional boundaries;
- targeting the customer-base of sex traffickers (i.e., johns) to aid in the identification of victims and to reduce the demand for sex trafficking;
- increasing the involvement of survivors of human trafficking in the North Carolina anti-human trafficking movement to ensure that trafficking responses, remedies, and services are victim-centered;
- developing a centralized, comprehensive, confidential, and dedicated human trafficking agency with the capacity to serve all of North Carolina by providing training, outreach, and inclusive services for victims of human trafficking;
- documenting and standardizing promising practices in human trafficking aftercare; and
- collecting data on the prevalence and incidence of human trafficking in North Carolina.

Ongoing challenges. Notwithstanding the project successes, the findings also showed that significant challenges remained. Critical, perplexing issues facing North Carolina's anti-human trafficking movement include the following challenges:

- Building and enhancing positive interagency and interdisciplinary communication and collaboration among all organizations working to address and respond to the problem of human trafficking in North Carolina.
- Encouraging and enabling efforts to prosecute the perpetrators of human trafficking to help ensure justice and safety for victims, as well as to prevent future trafficking crimes and victims.
- Filling critical gaps in short-term aftercare service delivery system, including a statewide system to provide case management services; bilingual and culturally relevant mental health services; shelter and transitional housing for victims; and services for both female and male victims of human trafficking.

- Developing statewide aftercare service system to address the long-term, ongoing needs of human trafficking victims.
- Facilitating timely, helpful immigration remedies for foreign-born victims of human trafficking.
- Developing strategies to address and respond to human trafficking in the rural parts of the state and in North Carolina's smaller communities.

Importantly, even though this project and research was focused on pre-certified, foreign-born victims of human trafficking, most of the participants' discussions and the research findings were related to the general issue of human trafficking in North Carolina, and inclusive of domestic and foreign trafficking, labor and sex trafficking, and adult and child trafficking.

In addition, participants discussed the overlap among various types of human trafficking victims. Given these overlaps, most North Carolina organizations appear to be working to address human trafficking in comprehensive ways. In turn, understanding that efforts to respond to human trafficking in North Carolina are broad and comprehensive can be valuable information for funders of human trafficking services and initiatives. Funders might wish to develop specific requests for proposals to target underserved and neglected groups of human trafficking victims (e.g., adult sex trafficking victims, labor trafficking victims, male victims of all types). Nonetheless, current North Carolina efforts are focused on developing capacity to respond to human trafficking broadly and comprehensively, whatever the victim type. Given the nascent state of the North Carolina anti-human trafficking response system, such broad-based strategies appear well reasoned. Organizations likely need to develop their overall capacity to respond to human trafficking before trying to specialize their efforts into specific human trafficking subtypes. Accordingly, funders might be better served by supporting broad-based human trafficking response strategies, at least until statewide capacity is further developed.

Brief summary of research limitations. In considering the research results, we encourage readers to be mindful of the study limitations. First, the results of this research are based on a small sample. Nonetheless, this research was intended to be exploratory in nature and focused on evaluating the NCCASA-led and OVC-funded collaborative project. Among the five partner organizations in this collaborative project, representatives from all five participated in both data collection points. Further, these five organizations represent the forefront of the anti-human trafficking movement in North Carolina. Thus, the data collection in this study represents the shared viewpoints and collective wisdom of the key actors and organizations in North Carolina's efforts to address and respond to human trafficking.

The protection of research participants' confidentiality in the evaluation was essential given that the group of people working on the issues of human trafficking in North Carolina is small and that they are all well-known to one another as well as well-known to others in North Carolina (e.g., funders, policymakers, state leaders). To reduce the possibility of deductive disclosure of

participants' identities, as well as to increase participants' comfort to speak frankly, we collected and reported limited participant demographic data.

Given the qualitative study design, conclusions cannot be drawn about whether the NCCASA-led project specifically enabled changes in statewide human trafficking response capacity. As described in greater detail in this report, there are many ongoing statewide efforts to address human trafficking in North Carolina. It is possible that the positive outcomes described in this report are the result of one of these other efforts or the combination of all such efforts rather than the result of only the NCCASA-led project. Likewise, these other efforts or their combination, might have led to or exacerbated the challenges described in this report.

We also encourage readers to be mindful of certain aspects of the nature of the organizations involved in the NCCASA project task force and this research. First, as a statewide networking resource of collaborating individuals and agencies in anti-trafficking initiatives and efforts, NCCAHT is both a singular entity and an umbrella association for all persons and organizations interested in the anti-human trafficking movement in North Carolina. Thus, there was overlap among the personnel and organizations between NCCAHT and the other organization that participated in this research. Second, and as noted throughout the report, all the organizations involved in this project are dynamically changing because of the nascent nature of the anti-human trafficking movement in North Carolina. Consequently, these organizations will continue to adapt, change and grow with shifts in funding, personnel as well as the anti-human trafficking environmental context in North Carolina and beyond. Thus, the findings about these organizations and their relationships to one another may have limited relevance in the future.

Clear research strengths was that data collection occurred at two time points 12-months apart to enable an assessment of dynamic changes in the statewide capacity to respond to human trafficking over the course of the project. We note here that most of the participants (9 of 14; 64.3%) participated in both waves of data collection, allowing those participants to reflect on changes related to NCCASA's project.

Conclusion. Despite the study limitations, the results of this evaluation research provide valuable information and lessons-learned from this multi-year project to respond to human trafficking in North Carolina. Specifically, the research findings highlight critical statewide gaps and needs, which in turn, provide a helpful roadmap for North Carolina's ongoing and future efforts to address human trafficking. In addition, the research findings highlight the accomplishments and successes of the nascent but growing anti-human trafficking movement in North Carolina. Accordingly, our research team hopes that findings from this evaluation provide valuable information for sustaining and advancing human trafficking responses in North Carolina. Although the challenge of human trafficking will not be easily addressed because of its complexity, the horrors and human toll of this problem require our best and continued efforts in North Carolina and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of human trafficking is an increasing concern in North Carolina, with anecdotal evidence suggesting that all aspects of human trafficking are a growing problem in both rural and urban areas of the state (Jayson, 2013; Sullivan, 2010). In 2010, the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) awarded a grant to the North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NCCASA) to lead a multi-year effort aimed at developing statewide infrastructure to provide comprehensive services for pre-certified foreign national victims of human trafficking.

The term *pre-certified* indicates that the foreign national adult victim of human trafficking has not yet been issued a Certification Letter from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or the Office of Refugee Resettlement. Certified victims of human trafficking are eligible to receive certain federal benefits and support programs despite their undocumented immigration status. However, the certification process can be lengthy, and pre-certified victims of human trafficking are those most often in need of immediate help. Accordingly, pre-certified foreign national adult victim of human trafficking are among one of the most vulnerable groups of human trafficking victims because they cannot easily access all the resources and supports that are available to certified trafficking victims and victims who are U.S. citizens.

In assessing North Carolina's ability to address the needs of human trafficking victims, NCCASA determined that the state lacked the infrastructure to accomplish the following critical tasks:

1. Adequately meet the immediate needs of victims of human trafficking once victims are identified;

2. Conduct trainings in victim-centered services for groups of service providers and professionals who are most likely to encounter trafficking victims in their work; and
3. Increase public awareness about the growing problem of human trafficking in North Carolina.

To address these critically important needs, NCCASA led a 3-year effort to develop a statewide coordinated response and to establish a state-level service system for pre-certified foreign national victims of human trafficking.

To accomplish these goals, NCCASA began by building on existing community and state resources. Specifically, NCCASA formed a statewide task force bringing together other key organizations involved with the issue of human trafficking. The task force members included the following organizations:

- Legal Aid of North Carolina;
- North Carolina Coalition Against Human Trafficking (NCCAHT);
- Pitt County Sheriff's Office; and
- Salvation Army of Wake County.

The task force was convened for the primary purpose of developing an infrastructure that would have the capacity to meet the statewide needs identified above. The initial development of this task force began in 2008 when a new anti-human trafficking funding opportunity came to North Carolina from the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and from OVC with the support of the North Carolina Governor's Crime Commission (Fryer, n.d.; Sullivan, 2010). The BJA award was made to the Pitt County Sheriff's Office, and the OVC award was made NCCASA. This dual focused-funding aimed to help North Carolina both develop victim response efforts, as well as

state and local law enforcement capacities to investigate, rescue and restore victims of human trafficking. Legal Aid of North Carolina and Salvation Army of Wake County joined the task force as sub-contractors to the NCCASA grant to provide legal and case management services to human trafficking victims respectively. NCCAHT was invited to the task force in its capacity as a statewide networking resource of collaborating individuals and agencies in anti-trafficking initiatives and efforts.

To accomplish their goals, the collaborative task force outlined a strategy with three specific steps:

1. Develop a comprehensive set of victim-centered services and provide those services to victims of human trafficking;
2. Create trainings for service providers and law enforcement professionals that provide these professional audiences with knowledge based on the best practices in working with victims of human trafficking; and
3. Enhance anti-trafficking awareness and collaborations throughout North Carolina communities.

From the outset of this collaborative project, the NCCASA staff were aware of the need for a rigorous evaluation to establish the utility of the project's products and processes. A systematic, rigorous evaluation would not only provide findings about the dynamic operations of the collaborative task force but also yield information on lessons learned from this project. Findings from such an evaluation could inform the development of services and service protocols for trafficking victims in general. Such information could help fill existing gaps in knowledge and research regarding how program developers and service providers (e.g., advocates, attorneys, counselors, health care providers, law enforcement professionals, and

social workers) can best help trafficking victims (Clawson, Dutch, Salomon, & Grace, 2009; Kaufman & Crawford, 2011; Logan, Walker & Hunt, 2009).

Moreover, little research has been conducted regarding the development of anti-human trafficking capacity and infrastructure in rural areas of the United States. North Carolina's small communities and rural areas have been especially challenged in their efforts to address human trafficking (Fryer, n.d.; Sullivan, 2010). Thus, a rigorous evaluation of this project had the potential to help inform similar efforts in other states with rural locales.

To ensure a well-designed and rigorous evaluation was accomplished, the NCCASA staff collaborated with a team of researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) School of Social Work. The UNC research team sought to evaluate changes in North Carolina trafficking-response infrastructure related to NCCASA's efforts to help develop this infrastructure.

Human Trafficking Definitions and Prevalence

The United Nations defines human trafficking as the

Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of person, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, or deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2004).

Similarly, the United States' 2000 Trafficking Victims Protection Act defines the problem as both: "*sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age;*" and "*the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.*" These definitions acknowledge that trafficking

takes many forms, including bonded and forced labor, child soldiers, debt bondage, involuntary domestic servitude, as well as sex trafficking. This project and research focused on *pre-certified foreign national victims of human trafficking*. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2012) defines the term *pre-certified foreign national victims* as “persons who are neither U.S. citizens nor Lawful Permanent Residents (‘foreign victims’) and who have not yet received a Certification Letter from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services allowing them to access federally funded benefits and services to the same extent as refugees” (p. 2).

One challenge in addressing the needs of human trafficking victims in general and the needs of pre-certified foreign national victims specifically is the limited means available to measure the prevalence of human trafficking and obtain valid and reliable estimates of the incidence of the problem (Tyldum & Brunovskis, 2005). The perpetrators of human trafficking are clearly motivated to keep their criminal acts concealed. Thus, little research and information exists on the traffickers and those who contribute in various ways to the perpetration of this terrible offense (Schauer & Wheaton, 2006). Similarly, the victims of human trafficking are a hidden population comprised of people who might not wish to be identified, such as individuals involved in prostitution or undocumented immigrants. For all these reasons, the research methods typically used for investigating prevalence and incidence of a problem are not useful when attempting to establish the scope of human trafficking. In turn, unfortunately little empirical evidence is available regarding the extent of the problem of human trafficking. However, based on what is known, the U.S. government estimates as many as 50,000 people are trafficked against their will into the United States each year (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002). However, these estimates are disputed among groups investigating human trafficking, which

have reached consensus that human trafficking into the United States is more prevalent than suggested by federal estimates (Caliber, 2007; Clawson et al., 2009).

To the best of our knowledge, no prevalence or incidence estimates are available for human trafficking in North Carolina (Jayson, 2013). Advocates working to end human trafficking in North Carolina have speculated that both international labor and sex trafficking are growing problems because the state has social and environmental conditions associated with high demands for labor and sex trafficking (Jayson, 2013; Sullivan, 2010; Tyldum & Brunovskis, 2005). Examples of social and environmental conditions associated with human trafficking include the presence of military bases, which might increase the demand for sex trafficking, and an extensive agricultural industry, which might increase the demand for labor trafficking.

Addressing Human Trafficking in North Carolina

Addressing needs of victims in North Carolina. A key goal of NCCASA's project was to increase North Carolina's capacity to meet the needs of trafficking victims once identified. This was a laudable and important goal because the needs of human trafficking victims are considerable. Victims will always need safety and protection. In addition, depending on the victims' circumstances, their location, and the form of trafficking they were forced to endure, victims might also need language interpretation and translation, legal and immigration advocacy, physical and mental health care, shelter and housing, education and job training, life skills training, and substance abuse treatment (Clawson et al., 2009; Logan et al., 2009; Macy & Johns, 2011). Moreover, a statewide survey of North Carolina providers who delivered services to human trafficking victims showed a critical need to provide high-quality services to victims throughout the state (Sullivan, 2010).

Unfortunately, the research on the specific needs of labor trafficking victims is limited. Nonetheless, some research suggests the needs of foreign-born trafficking victims are similar regardless of the types of trafficking experienced (Clawson et al., 2009). Therefore, the small body of evidence regarding the needs of sex trafficking victims can also be helpful in understanding the needs of labor trafficking victims.

Sex trafficking victims often sustain numerous physical injuries and suffer long-term psychological consequences of their trafficking experiences (Gajic-Veljanoski & Stewart, 2007; Hodge, 2008; Miller, Decker, Silverman, & Raj, 2007). Research has also shown that the traffickers subject their victims to poor nutrition, dangerous working conditions, and exposure to infectious disease (Spear, 2004). Women who have been trafficked report high rates of health problems and infections, including sexually transmitted infections (Raymond & Hughes, 2001). Preliminary findings from research on human trafficking have shown that sex trafficking might be a major contributor to the worldwide spread of HIV/AIDS among heterosexual populations (Gajic-Veljanoski & Stewart, 2007).

In addition to the negative effects sex trafficking has for victims' physical health, this form of trafficking also has significant, negative effects on mental health such as depression, anxiety, panic attacks, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicidal ideation, and suicide (Flowers, 2001; Raymond & Hughes, 2001). Substance abuse is also a common and serious problem for victims of sex trafficking. Traffickers often use substances as a method of control over their victims, or survivors of trafficking might turn to substance use as a means of coping with the trafficking ordeal (Clawson et al., 2009; Raymond & Hughes, 2001). Consequently, even after victims have been freed from their traffickers, many victims/survivors continue to abuse substances because of the physical and mental aftermath of the experience.

Unfortunately, the dearth of evidence-based practices for addressing the needs of victims of either labor or sex trafficking means it is unknown whether current approaches to victim services do more harm than good (Kaufman & Crawford, 2011). Often, trafficking victims receive services similar to those provided for victims of domestic violence or sexual assault. However, preliminary studies suggest that the needs of trafficking victims are unique to this group, and these victims require a treatment modality specific to their unique needs and one that accounts for their high risk for re-traumatization and re-victimization (Logan et al., 2009; Macy & Johns, 2011; Ursano et al., 2004). In addition to their physical and mental trauma, foreign-born victims might not speak English; a barrier that can further isolate victims from help and a factor that requires the services of translators, complicating service options and increasing service costs.

One recent research publication proposed a comprehensive framework of aftercare service for international victims of human trafficking (Macy & Johns, 2011). Specifically, this framework noted at the time of emancipation from trafficking, a victim's most immediate need is for crisis services designed to provide

- immediate safety;
- emergency shelter;
- basic necessities;
- language interpretation;
- emergency medical care; and
- crisis legal advocacy.

Once these immediate needs have been addressed, victims will then need services to address their recovery from the trauma of trafficking and to begin rebuilding their lives by beginning to

establish stability. In addition, victims have intermediate needs that require ongoing health, human, and legal services to address their (a) physical health, (b) mental health, (c) substance abuse problems, (d) safety, (e) transitional housing, (f) immigration issues, (g) legal issues, and (h) language needs (e.g., interpretation or translation services). As these intermediary needs are met, victims enter a phase of recovery and stability in which they begin to establish independence and begin to require services to address their long-term needs. Long-term service needs might include life skills training, language skills, and education or job training. In addition, depending on whether victims decide to remain in the United States, long-term needs could also include services for permanent housing and family reunification or repatriation to their country-of-origin.

Increasing awareness of human trafficking. Other key goals of NCCASA's project were focused on increasing the awareness of the problem of human trafficking in North Carolina. Specifically, the project sought to increase awareness of the problem among the statewide audience of service providers and professionals (e.g., child welfare workers, court and legal system professionals, health care professionals, law enforcement professionals, and mental health professionals). In addition, the project sought to increase public awareness about the problem of human trafficking in North Carolina. These goals are consistent with global efforts to address the problem of human trafficking, as well as the Palermo Protocol, which was the United Nations' initial call for anti-human trafficking advocacy. The Palermo Protocol was created in 2000 to address human trafficking globally by calling on governments to criminalize trafficking, to prosecute traffickers, and to take action to prevent trafficking and protect victims. (For more information about the Palermo Protocol, see <http://www.palermoprotocol.com/>) In response to this call, the United States Congress passed the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection

Act of 2000 (<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/10492.pdf>), and President Bill Clinton signed the act into law. Among other things, the Act allows international victims who have been trafficked into the United States to apply for 4-year temporary visas (i.e., T-visas) that can lead to permanent resident status.

Since that time, human trafficking has been received increased attention worldwide, especially within systems of criminal justice, prevention, policy, and human services. However, attention to human trafficking is uneven among world governments as well as among states within the United States. For example, although there are discrepancies among the numbers reported by various federal entities, the number of T-visas granted has been regularly far fewer than the annual number allowed by the U.S. Congress (i.e., 5000 each year; Pollock & Hollier, 2010). This apparent gap between the number of victims' needing temporary visas the number actually receiving available remedies might be the result of the criteria for visa eligibility. Even though trafficking victims are often coerced into committing illegal acts, the visa eligibility criteria require victims to report their crimes to federal authorities and to make a commitment to helping authorities with all future investigations and prosecutions. Fulfilling those criteria is likely an intimidating prospect and a psychologically draining duty for victims (Pollock & Hollier, 2010). The gap between victims' needs and available remedies might also stem from the long waiting periods for visas to be issued, which can last for many months to several years.

Whatever the cause, it is clear that victims' access to benefits and protection is often limited and sometimes extremely difficult. No country or government has yet developed a comprehensive and effective strategy to address human trafficking. Further, the absence of research on best practice protocols to address human trafficking has created a critical knowledge gap around an ever-increasing problem. Consequently, it is "yet to be determined" whether or to

what extent emerging strategies are helpful in preventing trafficking, prosecuting traffickers, and protecting the victims of trafficking (Kaufman & Crawford, 2011). For all these reasons, increasing the awareness of human trafficking among the public and professionals in North Carolina was a critical first step toward developing a statewide infrastructure to provide comprehensive services for pre-certified foreign national victims of human trafficking. Without widespread awareness and strong commitment to address the problem of human trafficking, North Carolina is unlikely to strengthen its capacity to identify and respond to the needs of human trafficking victims.

RESEARCH EVALUATIONS AND METHODS

Study Aims

The research team's primary aim was to evaluate changes in North Carolina's trafficking-response infrastructure that stemmed from NCCASA's efforts to develop a comprehensive and more responsive infrastructure. Specifically, this evaluation used a mid- and post-test qualitative research design

- to collect information about existing trafficking programs, protocols, and services available in North Carolina;
- to collect follow-up information about these trafficking programs, protocols, and services as they existed in North Carolina at the end of the project period; and
- to collect information about changes in these trafficking programs, protocols, and services that occurred during the project period.

Accordingly, this research sought to provide not only findings about the dynamic operations of the collaborative project but also information on lessons learned from this project.

To evaluate changes in North Carolina trafficking-response infrastructure, our team conducted an exploratory qualitative study that used a standardized protocol for open-ended focus groups, a standardized protocol for interviews, and a demographic survey that was developed for this study. In designing this evaluation, the research team chose qualitative methods over quantitative methods because many aspects of human trafficking are poorly understood and so complicated that using a quantitative approach would require many untested, risky assumptions. Further, we selected qualitative methods as the primary data collection approach because these methods do not restrict participant responses (Padgett, 2008) but rather

allow for rich, nuanced findings. Accordingly, qualitative methods were appropriate for this research given the nascent state of development in the anti-human trafficking movement in North Carolina. Supplementary quantitative information was sought to provide descriptive data on participant demographics.

Data was purposely collected at two time points to investigate changes in North Carolina statewide infrastructure over the course of the project. (See Figure 1 on the following page for the project and research timeline.) The first data collection point occurred at the project's mid-point, which was about 12 months after the project had begun initial assessments of program challenges, successes, and lessons-learned. This first data collection time point was selected as a joint decision of the research team and NCCASA. The rationale for collecting initial data at the project mid-point instead of the project start date was to provide sufficient time (a) to allow the partnering organizations to hire and establish key staff members to carry out the work of the project; (b) to enable the partnering organizations to form working relationships; and (c) to enable the project to initiate first steps and produce preliminary outcomes (e.g., the project initiated delivery of aftercare services for human trafficking victims, provider trainings had been developed and delivery of those training had begun). For these reasons, NCCASA and the research team determined that data collected at the project mid-point was likely to be richer than data collected at the outset of the project.

The second data collection point was scheduled about 12 months after the first data collection, placing the second data wave near the end of the project period. This data collection point was selected to assess program challenges, successes, and lessons-learned at the end of the project. In addition, these data were collected to investigate changes occurring over the project period and as the basis for recommendations for future work.

Before any data collection was begun, the methods for this study were reviewed and approved by the UNC Institutional Review Board (IRB). See Appendix A for the approved IRB application, and see Appendix B for all study materials (i.e., focus group/interview guide, recruitment materials, and survey instruments). After obtaining IRB approval, the research team sought and was approved for a Certificate of Confidentiality from Office for Victims of Crime (the project funder; See Appendix C for the approved application.)

Figure 1. Project and evaluation timeline for Developing North Carolina’s Capacity to Address Human Trafficking.

<p>NC HUMAN TRAFFICKING PROJECT: <u>2010-2011</u></p>	<p>NC HUMAN TRAFFICKING PROJECT: <u>2011-2012</u></p>	<p>NC HUMAN TRAFFICKING PROJECT: <u>2012-2013</u></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project goals established • Key staff hired • Project partners form working relationships and interagency collaborations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative project work is ongoing • <i>Mid-point evaluation data collection is carried out</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative project continues & finishes at end of year • <i>Final evaluation data collection is carried out</i>

To ensure a common understanding of key study variables, the research team established the following definitions of terms:

1. *human trafficking victim*: any individual working against his/her will or under false pretense who has been treated as though a non-living good; this definition is consistent with the global and U.S. government definitions of human trafficking presented earlier.
2. *service providers*: individuals working to provide services to trafficking victims; *service providers* include advocates, attorneys, counselors, health care providers, law enforcement professionals, and social workers. Further, the category of service provider includes individuals working exclusively with this vulnerable population as well as those who work part time with victims, regardless of whether that work is paid employment or volunteer work.

Participant Recruitment

Initial participant recruitment was conducted using both purposive and snowball sampling strategies. The five partnering organizations in this project were Legal Aid of North Carolina, NCCAHT, NCCASA, Pitt County Sheriff's Office, and the Salvation Army of Wake County. These organizations were asked to identify members who were leaders in their respective organizations: the identified leaders were the first group invited to participate in the evaluation study. The research team had made preliminary contact with all the organizations so the key leaders were aware that the research team would be contacting them about study participation. Initial invitations to participate were made via e-mail; if the recipient did not respond to the e-mail invitation, up to three follow-up telephone contacts were made to extend an invitation to participate in the research.

The study invitations offered the potential participants the option of participating in either a focus group conducted within their respective organization or an individual interview; the respondent could select the type of research participation depending on his/her preferences and availability. With the aim of developing rich and comprehensive data, the research team primarily conducted focus groups to enable participants within an organization to share collectively their perspectives, opinions, and feedback. Individual interviews were offered to maximize participation in data collection efforts (i.e., in the case when participants could not attend their organization's focus group due to scheduling conflicts) and to ensure that participants could participate in the research with confidentiality if they so desired.

Once the organizational representative accepted the research invitation, the evaluation team and the representative scheduled a day and time for a focus group and/or individual data collection meeting that was agreeable to the organization and staff members. The representative was then responsible for inviting her or his colleagues to participate in the scheduled focus group.

With only two exceptions, all participants in the first phase of data collection participated in focus groups. Two participants elected to participate in individual interviews because they had scheduling conflicts with the focus group times. Focus groups consisted of between two and four participants, and used an interview protocol of open-ended questions centered on the types, amounts, and quality of North Carolina anti-trafficking programs, protocols, and services. Some participants were members of two organizations that were project collaborators. Consequently, in the second round of data collection, individuals representing one organization who were also members of a second organization elected to join with the second organization's focus group meeting rather than to have a separate, potentially duplicative focus group meeting.

Each participant was invited to participate in two focus groups or individual interviews that were scheduled to be conducted during business hours in private offices at the participant's agency or organization. The two rounds of data collection were conducted at an approximate 12-month interval. In the first phase of data collection (i.e., project mid-point), the research team conducted two individual interviews and four focus groups. In the second round of data collection (i.e., project end), the research team conducted four focus groups. (See Figure 1 for project timeline.) The focus group discussion and interviews began after an initial 15-minute period for administrative duties that included obtaining participants' informed consent. During this administrative period, participants were also invited to complete a brief demographic survey and to complete a survey about their volunteer and/or work history with human trafficking programs. Participation in the survey was not a requirement of participation in the focus groups or interviews. The focus groups varied in duration, with a range of 29 to 100 minutes. The first author conducted all focus groups and interviews.

Data Collection Procedures

Overall, 14 anti-trafficking advocates and service providers provided qualitative and quantitative data during a focus group meeting or individual interview. Most of the focus groups and interviews were held in person; however, one interview in the first round of data collection and one focus group ($n = 2$) in the second round of data collection were held via telephone to accommodate participants' schedules and to maximize research participation.

In preparation for the focus groups and interviews, the research team developed an interview guide with open-ended and semi-structured questions. The same interview guide was used to conduct focus groups and the in-depth individual interviews (Patton, 2002). Using a semi-structured interview guide allows participants to give a wide range of responses without

restrictions. In turn, this open response approach encouraged respondents to generate novel themes, while the interview guide ensured that follow-up questions were asked to probe respondents on their elaboration and clarification of those themes, enhancing the depth of the responses and the quality of the data collected (Patton, 2002).

Interview questions explored the following topics:

- North Carolina's current capacity to address the problem of human trafficking, including promising practices and challenges to services or service delivery;
- NCCASA's project including participant satisfaction, and future goals.

Focus groups were held in the offices of the participants' respective agencies. For the focus group and interview conducted via telephone, each participant had provided a contact number for a private location where the participant felt comfortable responding to questions about human trafficking. The interviewer conducted the telephone interviews from a private office to ensure participant confidentiality. The focus groups and interviews were digitally recorded using two recorders to guard against technical failure. Study participants did not receive any incentive or compensation for their participation.

Following each focus group and interview, the digital audio files of the discussion were promptly transferred to the research team's secure computer, and then the digital audio files were transcribed. After the data transfer, a member of the research team deleted the files from the recording device. Transcripts were scrutinized for inadvertent or intentional references to personally identifying information (e.g., names, agency affiliation of co-worker names), and if found, were removed from the transcript to protect participant confidentiality.

Participant background information questionnaire. To complement the qualitative focus group and interview data, the research team asked participants to complete a brief

demographic and background information survey. The survey consisted of seven questions that focused on the participant's type work in the field of human trafficking; longevity in the field; education level; and basic demographic information such as age, gender, and race/ethnicity. Participants were assured that completing the survey was optional and did not affect their eligibility to participate in the focus group or interview. Paper copies of the survey were distributed and participants returned blank or completed surveys. The survey did not ask any identifying information. Survey responses were aggregated, and then individual copies of surveys were destroyed.

Data Analysis

In all, the focus groups and interviews yielded 10 transcripts. These transcripts were imported into Atlas.ti (version 7) and independently analyzed by the evaluation team (Weiss, 1994). An open-coding approach was used, with an initial list of codes developed from one representative transcript (Padgett, 2008; Patton, 2002). In addition, the preliminary coding scheme was informed by key research questions, the semi-structured interview guide, and the existing literature on human trafficking (Padgett, 2008; Patton, 2002). Following this coding plan, the evaluation team thoroughly reviewed each transcript to create a complete, detailed codebook. To determine the various levels of themes within and across the interviews, the evaluation team applied systematic review strategies and negative case analysis (Anastas, 2004; Padgett, 2008). During the process of transcription review, the team implemented constant comparison procedures, by comparing and contrasting themes generated from each analysis with existing themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The evaluation team carried out iterative coding concurrently with data collection (Padgett, 2008; Weiss, 1994). Successive reviews refined the definitions of existing codes, which prompted prompting the research team to develop a

hierarchical system for sorting codes. In addition, the successive reviews led to adding new codes and deleting codes. As a result, a group of themes common to the 10 transcripts emerged as key findings. Even with the fixed sample, the themes and key findings became increasingly evident and consistent as the research team completed data analysis (Patton, 2002). Data from the demographic surveys were aggregated and used to describe the participants overall.

RESEARCH EVALUATIONS FINDINGS

Participant Demographic Information

Twelve participants were involved in the first round of data collection (i.e., project mid-point); 10 participated in a focus group, and 2 participants completed individual interviews. At project completion, 11 participants took part in a second round of data collection. Most, but not all, participants took part in both rounds of data collection; however, 3 participants completed only the first round data collection, and 2 participants participated in only the second round data collection. Thus, 9 of 14 participants (64.3%) took part in both the mid-point (Wave 1) and project completion (Wave 2) data collection.

It is worth noting that North Carolina has a small community of professionals and service providers who work on the issue of human trafficking, and these people are well known to one another. Therefore, to reduce the possibility of deductive disclosure, we have not provided comprehensive descriptive information about the study participants. In some cases, percentages for the demographic findings do not sum to 100% because a participant reported unique data that are not reported here to maintain participant confidentiality. Further, the research team was worried that summarized demographic data on participants who participated at either or both collection points could lead to deductive disclosure given the small sample size of this study. Therefore, we have reported summarized participant demographic data grouped from each data collection time point.

Among the 12 participants at Wave 1, all were currently working (i.e., paid employment) in the field of human trafficking, including the specific areas of advocacy, case management, criminal justice/law enforcement, education, legal services, and sexual assault and/or domestic

violence services. In addition to paid positions, 2 of the 12 participants (14.3%) also worked as volunteers with an anti-human trafficking organization. Among the Wave 1 participants, 9 of 12 participants (75%) had 1–5-years' work or volunteer experience in the anti-human trafficking field, and 3 of 12 (25%) had 6–10-year's work or volunteer experience in the field. The 12 Wave 1 participants reported an average age of 36.25 years ($SD = 8.41$). Overall, the sample at Wave 1 was well educated, with 4 participants (33.3%) reporting they had completed a college/technical school degree, and 8 participants (66.7%) reporting they had completed some graduate coursework or a graduate degree.

Among the participants in the Wave 2 data collection (i.e., project completion), 10 of the 11 participants (90.9%) were working in paid positions the field of human trafficking, including areas such as advocacy, case management, criminal justice/law enforcement, education, legal services, and sexual assault and/or domestic violence services. In addition, 3 of the 11 participants (27.3%) were working as volunteers in the field of human trafficking. Among the Wave 2 participants, 5 of 11 participants (45.5%) had 1–5-years' work or volunteer experience in the anti-human trafficking field, and 5 of 11 participants (45.5%) had 6–10-year's work or volunteer experience in the field. The average age of the participants in the Wave 2 data collection was 32.8 years ($SD = 12.8$). Participants in the Wave 2 data collection reported education levels similar to those of the Wave 1 participants. Among the Wave 2 participants, 4 of 11 participants (36.4) reported they had completed a college/technical school degree, and 7 of 11 (63.6%) reported that they had completed a graduate degree.

Qualitative Findings

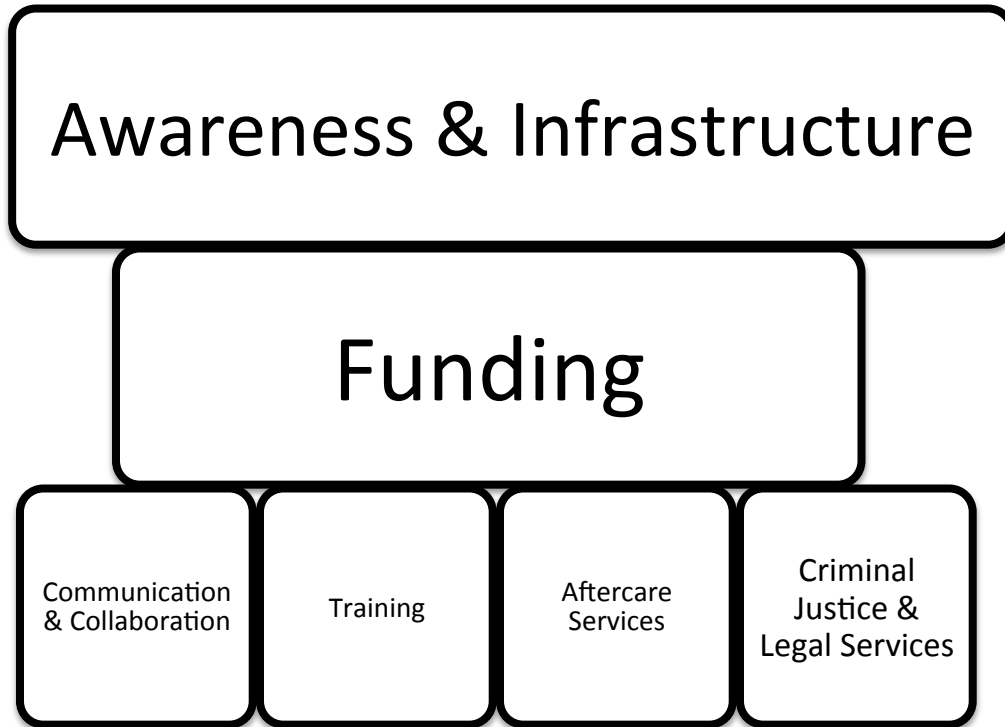
Over the course of the two data collection points, the participants discussed North Carolina's statewide capacity to provide comprehensive services for human trafficking victims in

general and specifically for pre-certified foreign national victims. These discussions focused on the system's strengths, challenges, and change over time, and possible solutions in moving forward to provide comprehensive services for human trafficking victims. The research team's analysis identified five key themes: (a) awareness and infrastructure, (b) funding, (c) communication and collaboration, (d) aftercare services and (e) criminal justice and legal services. Based on the data analysis, the research team determined that findings were layered such that research results ranged from overarching themes that were expressed universally by participants (thus appeared at both data points) to sub-themes expressed by individuals or subgroups of participants.

We created Figure 2 to organize the results in a meaningful presentation. (See the next page for Figure 2.) In Figure 2, overarching themes are at the top while sub-themes are placed below. Results will be presented in such a way as to move through Figure 2, top to bottom. We will also illustrate the research findings with direct participant quotations.

Again, we note here that the community of professionals and providers who work on the issue of human trafficking in North Carolina is small, and they are well known to one another. As a result, to reduce the possibility of deductive disclosure, we have not labeled the quotations with any participant information.

Figure 2. Key findings and themes from Developing North Carolina’s Capacity to Address Human Trafficking



Awareness and Infrastructure

At both Wave 1 and Wave 2 data points, participants' emphasized the significance of increasing *awareness* and building *infrastructure* to adequately address the problem of human trafficking in North Carolina. Overall, participants declared that awareness of the problem of human trafficking in North Carolina among professionals, service providers, and the North Carolina public was critically important for identifying victims and addressing the problem. The participants expressed concern that without increased awareness of the prevalence of human trafficking in the state, the state government is unlikely to commit resources to the development of anti-human trafficking infrastructure.

During the first round of focus groups and interviews, many participants identified critical gaps in statewide system best described as limited awareness and limited infrastructure. Participants described the ways in which limited awareness acted as a barrier to victim identification and created challenges in accessing resources needed by the organizations trying to aid identified victims. In addition, participants described the ways in which North Carolina's current and inadequate infrastructure to respond to the human trafficking problem also limited efforts to provide comprehensive services for victims. The three participant comments below were typical of many participants' experiences with the problems of lack of awareness and the critical gaps in the existing infrastructure.

I've called places and talked about human trafficking, and people don't know what it is, they think traffic ticket or...and I have to explain and then it's like "Oh no, that doesn't happen in my community!" And as we talked more, they can say, "Oh, I've seen that before" and [then] they realize...

I think part of our standstill at this point, even with our rapid response teams [i.e., community-based, interdisciplinary teams developed to provide services to human trafficking victims in a given location], is that we're not working a lot of cases. We've done a lot of planning, we've got stuff placed, and we know who the players are. But

cases don't get identified every week like you would see in domestic violence or sexual assault. And so, I think that we are trying to find a way to continue to keep the people at the table and keep their interest.

I feel like the capacity is there, it just has to be organized—you know, it's very disorganized right now—there's just not a lot of collaboration between all of the agencies across the state.

Some participants stressed the importance of increasing awareness of human trafficking as a means of addressing the stereotypes that many North Carolina service providers, professionals, and the public hold about the human trafficking victims, particularly foreign-born victims. One participant offered the following explanation of the impact stereotypes can have on the way service providers respond to human trafficking victims:

If the person was smuggled here, then automatically, well technically they committed a crime. So that's what they [service providers, professionals, the public] look at, "You committed a crime," but not seeing that yes, okay, this happened, but...they were told that they were coming here [to the United States] for this reason or that, but they're being forced to work in a brothel or forced to perform sex acts or work on a field. So that is trafficking. But they [service providers, professionals, the public] are still saying, "But this person [the trafficking victim] did this [broke the law]."

These participants further explained an urgent need existed to address the stigmas, stereotypes, and misinformation around human trafficking in order to garner support and resources for the development of the anti-human trafficking infrastructure.

By the end of the NCCASA project, many participants in the Wave 2 focus groups were emphatic about statewide improvements in the key areas of concern, especially regarding general awareness about the problem of human trafficking. The participant comments below were representative of the numerous statements of positive change:

We've seen an uptake, uptake in reporting, so I think there is a greater awareness that is going on. I think there's more people coming to the table that we were hoping would...the past year I've really felt some growth...in a lot of positive ways.

I would say that there's a big difference between when we did this interview last year and where we are now. I mean, just across the board, even an understanding about what trafficking is when I make a phone call...

I think since our last discussion last year, our capacity to address human trafficking has grown tremendously, I think it's definitely something that's on [the radar screen] – even the radars of our legislators now...I feel like it's a big step in North Carolina.

Even though participants noted positive changes, the research findings also show that participants continued to voice their concerns regarding North Carolina's capacity to address human trafficking. In particular, participants discussed the rural nature of most of the state as a considerable, ongoing challenge for addressing human trafficking in North Carolina. Participants described this challenge in the following ways.

We're not Chicago... where people are on board and sort of know off the bat what this [trafficking] looks like, we don't necessarily have that awareness or those resources already in place.

It's harder to get the trainings out there [in small North Carolina communities and rural areas of the state], it's harder to ensure services are being administered and done well, and we know it's [trafficking is] happening a lot in rural areas too, so it's a challenge.

Another participant described the difficulties of trying to provide service for trafficking victims who are identified in smaller North Carolina communities and rural parts of the state:

There are places [in the state] that are more well-equipped than others...you know, North Carolina is big! If a victim is somewhere far away from a city, it's hard for us to help them, we might have to move them to Raleigh or Greensboro...we don't have the resources to go to everywhere the victims are.

Further, many participants noted that although awareness had improved, there were still significant gaps in services and the current system for identifying and responding to human trafficking victims in North Carolina. This following comment made by one participant illustrates the perspective expressed by many participants:

We're finding them [human trafficking victims] much later than we should be. Most of them [became human trafficking victims] before they were 18 and went through multiple contexts [e.g., social services, legal systems]... and have just fallen through the cracks of being identified as trafficking [victims]. And so, it's when they're an adult that they're being identified and it would be great if we could slowly identify earlier and earlier, you know, to prevent all of that falling through the cracks.

As an overarching theme, the *Limitations in Awareness and Infrastructure* played an important role in the overall interpretation of the qualitative results from this research. First, as the most predominant theme among the findings, our research team determined the theme of limitations in awareness and infrastructure was related to all other themes found in this research. Second, this research suggests a synergistic relationship exists among the theme of limitations in awareness and infrastructure and the other key themes identified in this study. That is, participants described a cascading effect stemming from deficits in awareness and infrastructure. First, the limited awareness and infrastructure reduces attention to funding and resources for anti-human trafficking work. In turn, the overlooked need for funding limits opportunities to provide services to victims, limits opportunities for criminal justice responses, and limits opportunities to develop anti-human trafficking initiatives. However, participants also expressed that they thought that as increases in anti-human trafficking work, related criminal justice responses, and service provision to victims were accompanied by positive growth in awareness and infrastructure.

Awareness: A Two-Sided Coin. On the one hand, participants were universally positive about the importance of increasing awareness of the human trafficking problem among service providers, professionals, and the general public to help generate infrastructure and resources for anti-human trafficking work in North Carolina. Nonetheless, at both data collection points, most participants also expressed concerns about well-meaning but uninformed individuals and organizations taking up anti-human trafficking work in isolation and without having the needed

training, credentials, expertise, and skills to carry out such work adequately and safely. The two participant quotes that follow illustrate this area of concern.

[Human trafficking] is a hot issue. People are sympathetic. More and more people are kind of coming out of the woodwork wanting to volunteer, wanting to do something. In general that's great, but we're getting people with no training—without a complete understanding of what trafficking even is or, you know, with no experience working with victims—who are trying to jump in and figure out what to do. And it's hard to figure out where to plug them in... They have great intentions, but it's an ongoing challenge trying to figure out how to get them plugged in.

We've seen people who want to provide direct services to victims raise money and get things together to begin providing services. But they don't necessarily have the licensure or insurance or all of the things that they would need to provide those services lawfully. And also, there's such a clamor for legislation. And some of the legislators or people working with the legislators are really plugged into the gaps in the law and the state. And then other folks really just want to create legislation around, or preventing human trafficking, but aren't very well connected to people who have been working on trafficking for a while. So we've seen a bit of a disconnect there. Some folks are super plugged in... and there's some other folks that are very disconnected from what I think are the people who are serving victims.

In general, participants reported they were worried that the lack of training and credentials would ultimately compromise the efforts of these individuals and organizations, and, at best, such efforts would result in ineffectual enterprises and wasted resources. However, participants expressed apprehensions that at worst, such enterprises could result in further harm and trauma to trafficking victims, and cause substantial damage to statewide anti-trafficking efforts.

Funding

On the whole, participants' perspectives on the current level of funding — a key theme — were characterized as (a) current use of funds, (b) funding challenges, and (c) proposed solutions to funding challenges. Notably, participants universally expressed that the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) grant and the NCCASA project were significant, important statewide

resources. One participant commented, “*Without the OVC grant, we really wouldn’t have been able to get started...*” Another participant echoed, “*I don’t know how we would have ever started a program without the OVC funds...*” Another participant’s comment provided historical context for the impact of the NCCASA project:

It’s been almost 10 years since human trafficking has [begun to be] addressed in the state, and I think for a while we were very stagnate. ...and the past couple of years I’ve really felt some growth in a lot of positive ways. We still have things to work on, but I have noticed the growth and I’m really excited about it.

In sum, participants viewed the OVC grant as integral to implementing key initiatives and programs to build North Carolina’s anti-human trafficking capacity.

All participants recognized the critical need for increased funding to support and expand current anti-human trafficking initiatives: “*We need more people working on this issue, which means more potential funding.*” In a related vein, many participants noted that although they were passionate about the issue of human trafficking, their paid positions at their respective agency or organizations was not a position dedicated to anti-human trafficking issues, and therefore, limiting their work on human trafficking. The following participant comments summarize the responses of many:

None of us do this [anti-human trafficking work] full-time — we use extra time we have to work on this and, you know, it’s not enough time, but we work with what we have. It would be great to have a full-time person...there would be more than enough for a full-time person.

We have all these wonderful people who are taking time out of their schedules without any funding to actually participate [in anti-human trafficking work]. We have the capacity here [North Carolina], I feel like, to get a lot of things done, and we have the people who have the passion who want do the work. It’s just getting those pieces together would be, for me, the biggest issue.

Participants also clearly recognized an urgent need for consistent, sustained funding for anti-human trafficking positions and organizations. As an example of the import of sustained funding, participants described forming close, productive working relationships with other anti-human trafficking advocates, professionals, and service providers and then asking, “*What happens when their funding runs out?*” Moreover, participants discussed the considerable expertise and experience that was lost every time an organization’s funding ended and the organization either disbanded or had to cut the positions and people who had been working on human trafficking issues. As one participant stated, “*We lost...people [who] were immensely skilled in all kinds of ways that you couldn’t have ...written in a job description.*” Other participants described their experiences of the ways in which lack of consistent funding has restricted the overall growth of North Carolina’s capacity to respond to human trafficking:

So many positions are [supported with] short-term funding. You have folks that are fantastic and do great work and build connections — because so much of this work is networking and face-to-face connection and trust. And you establish those best practices and then that grant runs out because it was only an 18-month position or something. And that’s really frustrated the growth of North Carolina’s ability to identify victims and to give them appropriate aftercare.

One thing that has thwarted some of our progress in the state are the more extreme expansions and retractions of different funding streams specifically for anti-human trafficking work... It appears like those grant cycles are 2 years, 3 years, and we get really great self-starters in positions, and then funding will change. And because so much of our progress in these smaller coalitions is personality driven, it’s very much based on networking. Maybe that funding gets replaced a year later or 2 years later, but [we’ve lost those people and] we’re starting from scratch in those parts of the state again.

Many participants in the Wave 2 focus groups (i.e., program completion) expressed uncertainty about the continuity of not only their organization’s anti-trafficking programming but also staff positions in their organization because the organization had not yet received responses

from potential funders. One participant expressed the need for funding to continue current efforts:

I guess the main concern is just seeing more funding come in so that everything we're doing right now continues and doesn't stop when the grant ends.

Not surprisingly, proposed solutions to these challenges focused on consistent, sustained funding streams from state and national grantors. One participant's opinion reflected the perspectives of many:

If we could get consistent funding — funding for trainings, funding for case managers, funding for services and coordination — then we could really attract good people. [Potential staff would know] it's not just a job for a year or two, but a job for the long haul.

Interagency Communication and Collaboration

Participants characterized the sub-theme of *interagency communication and collaboration* as partnership among various people and organizations that (ideally) are working together toward common goals in the North Carolina anti-human trafficking movement.

Particular strengths of the North Carolina anti-human trafficking movement within this theme of collaboration and communication included the following:

- knowledge of resources across the state: *“I mean, for the most part in terms of organizations, I would say we know who's taking cases...we know the vast majority of what services are out there”*;
- passionate, dedicated workers: *“There are so many people who have the heart for this work, and want to help...feel passionately about helping these victims”*; and
- some especially strong, positive interagency working relationships: *“I work with the same case manager pretty much every time I make a referral, and she's wonderful. I know when I call, she's going to take care of things, and I don't have to worry.”*

Despite these strengths, many participants described challenges and difficulties with communication and collaboration among anti-human trafficking organizations, particularly when

in working with new agencies and/or forming new relationships. Participants emphasized that better interagency communication would result in better collaboration, and in turn, better services for victims. One participant's comment summarized the majority of responses to this issue:

There's so many organizations, it gets a little diffuse in terms of who's doing what and then how do we really, how do we target our resources and energy and time to have the biggest effect possible?

Other participants described their experiences with challenges to interagency communication and collaboration as consuming time and energy that could more dedicated to providing services if a more effective infrastructure were available:

We are spending so much time in our circles trying to figure our things with us that we could have been dedicating some of that time to actual services to victims or funding towards a project for victims' services.

The right and the left hand knowing what's going on in the state and it's...it's hard, you know, very well-intentioned, great programs, great speakers...just as a checks and balances to make sure we're not duplicating efforts across the state and wasting time...

So many times you've got [Agency A] versus [Agency B], and one doesn't understand the other. And it can be very adversarial when it doesn't need to be because we really need to be staying focus on, on the end result...because, you know, this is supposed to be a partnership.

Other participants described purposeful secrecy between agencies due to "territorialism."

One participant lamented this state of affairs, saying "*Unfortunately, there are agencies that aren't team players and are very territorial. And feelings are easily hurt and it really gets in the way of what's best for the victims...*" Another participant noted, "*I mean, face it. There's a lot [of agencies] and there are a lot of people doing things, but there's not a lot of collaboration.*"

Some participants noted that, in part, the difficulty in interagency communication and collaboration stemmed from the challenges of working with different disciplines and professions. That is, differences across professions and disciplines in terms of goals, missions, and best

practices are sometimes in conflict. For example, some participants described the conflict that can arise around victims' confidentiality. The operational definition of client confidentiality in human trafficking cases might differ depending on the role and purpose of the professional involved (e.g., advocate, attorney, case manager, criminal justice professional, health care provider, social worker). Likewise, some participants speculated that philosophical differences among professions, disciplines and even organizations could lead to conflict. Participants noted that some organizations and/or persons in the anti-human trafficking movement were guided by a "rescue" philosophy. Alternatively, other organizations and persons were guided by "empowerment" or "social justice" philosophies. In turn, such goal, mission, best practices and philosophical differences can lead to conflicts among professionals, each of whom is following their organizational mission and their professions' best practice guidelines.

Many participants connected the challenges with interagency communication and collaboration to the limited awareness and infrastructure as well as limited funding in North Carolina for anti-human trafficking efforts. The following quote from one participant summarized the viewpoint expressed by many participants.

When you look back at the territorial side of things, it has to do with capacity; when you look back at the communication side of things, it has to do with capacity. If people all have the niche that they're doing, but they can all completely do that niche then [everything] works well together. In reality, we know that law enforcement doesn't have the resources they need to investigate every case. We know that child welfare doesn't have the resources they need to handle every case either. So, just capacity building — for me — I think that would make the biggest difference because we now have enough key players in each area. But still, not the funding to spread to make it all work together.

In addition to greater awareness, enhanced infrastructure, and improved funding, participants offered other solutions to address the challenge of interagency communication and collaboration. Some participants recommended that organization within the North Carolina anti-human trafficking movement work to find their niche and organizational focus. These

participants expressed the greater organizational role clarification would promote positive interagency communication and collaboration. Furthermore, many participants expressed a strong desire to network with other service providers across the state and country. These participants recommended the development of statewide networking events and conferences to enable those working in various organizations to meet in-person, build relationships, communicate directly, and share ideas. One participant described the experience and the benefits of making these types of connections during a national anti-human trafficking conference:

They're [outside of North Carolina] doing [anti-human trafficking] work, and they're doing such a fabulous job — they're really going to be key in putting a toolkit together and... [we] will be able to have something to follow.

Other participants who had not had the opportunity to make similar connections with others working on anti-human trafficking issues discussed the ways in which networking opportunities would strengthen communication, and collaboration not only among North Carolina anti-trafficking organizations but also among service providers and professionals. Further, participants noted that networking opportunities would also bring benefits such as improved service provision and more effective anti-human trafficking responses.

Additional participant solutions for improving interagency communication ranged from the concrete (“*It would be fantastic to have a statewide calendar, and everyone puts different events that they would like to see on the calendar and different folks can communicate, so efforts aren't duplicated*”) to the philosophical (“*We just need to remember we are all on the same team...*”). Several participants expressed a desire for a full-time coordinator based at a statewide anti-trafficking organization to organize communication, events, meetings and networking across the state to facilitate better interagency collaboration.

Notably, a few participants described improvements in interagency communication and collaboration that had taken place over the course of the NCCASA project. The following participant comment exemplifies the improvements noted by some participants in the Wave 2 focus groups:

They [agency name] call us now for help with some of their victims, even if they're not human trafficking related. That partnership's just there; they know they can reach out, and we feel the same way.

Several participants noted the improvements in communication and collaboration were also influenced by a shift in their own philosophies and perspectives. As one participant explained, “...so we had to kind of shift our relationship and understand that if it's adversarial, we'll never win.”

Training

The subtheme *training* was defined among participants by the sharing of knowledge among agencies in the form of education, instruction, building knowledge, and developing skills and expertise. Participants described potential targets for such trainings as community- and state-level leaders; service providers; and professionals such as advocates, attorneys, case managers, child protection and child welfare workers, criminal justice personnel, health care professionals, law enforcement personnel, mental health professionals, and substance abuse professionals.

North Carolina strengths identified within the training theme included networking opportunities, which connects this subtheme to the theme of interagency communication and collaboration described above; “*Big trainings provide that opportunity for face-to-face connections as well as learning...*” Participants also attributed functional improvements in their collaborative interagency work to training opportunities and experiences: “*Before, it was hard to work with [agency name], but now we've done the trainings, and there's a real change in how*

things are being done...for the better.” Many participants named the face-to-face interactions with other providers that occur during trainings as being the one of the best ways to make lasting connections.

Law enforcement training. Participants mentioned the noteworthy changes in training that occurred from the mid-point of the NCCASA to the project’s completion. All participants in the Wave 2 focus groups excitedly described positive, statewide changes in North Carolina law enforcement’s responses to human trafficking that were the result of training on human trafficking issues. At project mid-point, many participants described overall North Carolina law enforcement’s treatment of human trafficking victims as “intimidating” and “not very victim-centered.” Also at the project mid-point, North Carolina had just begun to integrate a human trafficking training for state law enforcement officers into the mandatory basic training for all new law enforcement officers (Fryer, n.d.). At project completion, participants noted considerable differences in law enforcement awareness, victim identification, and victim treatment. One participant commented on the improvements the human trafficking training had made in law enforcement responses to human trafficking victims:

We have seen more law enforcement agents recognizing potential cases and showing interest and kind of coming to the table. And I think that [change] has something to do with the increased training available to law enforcement and the general outreach that we’ve had in the last few years.

Statewide training for professional and provider groups. At both data collection points, participants universally expressed a need for additional statewide trainings, particularly for specific groups of professionals and service providers. Nearly all participants described a critical need for human trafficking training for district attorneys across the state to encourage vigorous prosecution of the perpetrators of human trafficking. One participant described the urgency of the training need in this way:

Some of them [district attorneys] are even scared to try these new laws because they really haven't been tested yet. That's the biggest thing; getting some training for the DA's [district attorneys]. In my opinion, that's where we're lacking.

Several participants also mentioned a critical need for trainings on trauma-informed care and victim-center practices targeted toward the professionals and service providers who deliver aftercare services to human trafficking victims. The audience for these trainings includes, but is not limited to, advocates, child protection and child welfare workers, case managers, health care professionals, mental health professionals, and substance abuse treatment professionals. One participant explained that training for the direct services providers should be a priority, saying:

The thing that's lacking at most shelters, to me, is the trauma-informed care. We're not seeing that...and so, to me, that's what we should really use the bulk of the money for: training in trauma-informed care."

Further, some participants expressed concern that many North Carolina service providers and professionals do not fully understand the differences between human trafficking victims and other gender-based violence victims such as domestic violence and sexual assault. A few participants saw this discrepancy as a significant barrier to working effectively with human trafficking victims: *"It's [trauma of surviving human trafficking is] not the same as domestic violence or sexual assault; our victims need specialized care..."* However, other participants did not view the differences between human trafficking and domestic violence or sexual assault as significant conflicts:

There are people who are already doing the work. They're advocates; they're case managers already, and you train them on human trafficking because it's another victim. It's another type of victim, but it's still the same work..."

Although participants did not have consensus regarding how trainings should be tailored for professionals and service providers, participants agreed that North Carolina professionals and service providers are now widely ready for advanced training on human trafficking issues. It is

notable that both the project mid-point and project completion, all participants agreed that North Carolina had successfully implemented introductory human trafficking across the state to many groups of professionals and service providers throughout the state. Participants agreed that North Carolina providers and professionals could now benefit from advanced training on human trafficking issues regarding how to work with victims in their specific professional roles.

It seems like that's one of the biggest pieces that I think we're missing is...the more in-depth training... We've done the 101s [i.e., introductory trainings on human trafficking]...But we need to really go into [how] you as a service provider, how can you handle [human trafficking]. You as a law enforcement officer, how can you do your part. And then prosecutors and the DA's [district attorneys], the same thing."

Further, some participants noted the need for specialized trainings among North Carolina professionals and service providers to help address the needs of specific groups of human trafficking victims, particularly among health care and mental health care providers. One participant described such needs in the following way:

Latino men working with [mental health] therapists could be pretty difficult. Also, indigenous victims from Southern Mexico, Northern Guatemala, are going to have certain cultural conceptions about doctors and talking about your feelings, and ways of communicating that someone, a therapist not speaking their language, might not pick up on, or know how to address.

Proposed solutions to these training challenges primarily focused on ongoing statewide efforts to extend existing training resources.

We had an original manual [on responding to human trafficking], and now it's grown! It was just information about human trafficking and a couple of people, a couple of organization that could do the work and now it's this; we have a team of trainers..."

We've been able to train some other [organizations] in the state and show them, you know, the manuals and forms and everything that we have. And so, though they might make some changes, they have a starting point that's very similar to ours.

Overall, participants considered such advanced trainings for North Carolina professionals and service providers as a crucial next-step in developing statewide anti-human trafficking

infrastructure. Several participants emphasized advanced training as a key component of building state capacity and underscored that the efforts to develop advanced training should build on the experience, expertise, and work of those currently working in the North Carolina anti-human trafficking movement. The participant comment below summarized the discussion on developing advanced trainings:

They're [new agencies] not re-inventing the wheel. Go ahead and use what you know; the knowledge and the resource that is there. Because there are folks that have been at the table for a while, and I think to discount the knowledge that's available...that would be harmful...a real waste...

Several other participants underscored this recommendation by describing the value of having “home grown” North Carolina experts and professionals conduct trainings whenever possible. These participants described the importance of having anti-human trafficking trainers who are familiar with North Carolina laws, policies, and systems. Further, participants stated that local anti-human trafficking experts who were familiar with approaches being used across the state could provide helpful recommendations to trainees regarding strategies that had been successful in other North Carolina communities. Participants argued that North Carolina professionals and services providers would likely find a training that included anti-human trafficking efforts that had been developed and successfully implemented in North Carolina communities to be a more meaningful and relevant training than a training based on best practice recommendations that were generated either globally or in other regions of the United States.

Nonetheless, one participant voiced his/her concerns about the implications of focusing on local experts as a training strategies given the relatively small number of people currently working in the North Carolina anti-human trafficking movement: *“The people who can best do the training are also the people who are working with victims, so then [trainings] pulls their time away...”* In other words, when key North Carolina experts were providing training to build

statewide capacity and expertise, fewer victims were likely to receive the services that they needed in a timely way. Again, this participant comment shows how the training subtheme relates to the overall themes of limited awareness and infrastructure and limited funding as presented earlier.

Aftercare Services

The theme of *aftercare services* includes all participant viewpoints regarding services provided to identified victims, including advocacy, case management counseling, health care, legal aid, and shelters. Identified strengths in North Carolina’s aftercare services capacity and infrastructure included the following:

- referral processes: *“I think the referral process is going pretty smoothly”*
- service providers who are passionately motivated and dedicated: *“There are so many people who feel a connection to the work and victims;”* and
- ongoing development of specific services for trafficking victims: *“People see there’s a need, and services are catching up...”*

Particularly at program completion, participants were largely positive regarding the development of aftercare services in North Carolina and reported feeling hopeful that services were being developed and tailored to this vulnerable population. In contrast to participants’ viewpoints expressed at the project mid-point data collection, many participants at project completion remarked that as awareness has grown among advocates, case managers, and health and human services professionals, so has the awareness among North Carolina organizations of the need for victim-specific services for trafficking victims. A participant comment underscored the growth in awareness that had occurred during the project period:

People didn’t want to see it [before], so they didn’t. Now, with all the trainings and the increases in awareness, people see it [the reality of human trafficking] and realize we

need services, we need trauma-focused care...now it's just figuring out how to provide those services in a way that makes sense to providers and victims.

Moreover, participants described meaningful successes among the human trafficking victims with whom they had worked, as well as the creation of the state's rapid response teams, which they reported perceiving as a first step in the successful development of a statewide aftercare services network. One participant's statement exemplified the perspectives of many:

I feel like it's pretty remarkable to say that I do feel like we're providing very good services for our clients... I think about the cases we've closed, and it's been very moving to sit there and talk with them [clients], and speak of all the things that they have accomplished...it's been incredible. So even with all the road bumps and all the things we've had to learn, our clients, for the most part, are in so much better of places and that's great, you know? I think we have made a lot of good headway just with the program and...not only focusing just on our program, but also, statewide... with the different coalitions, the different rapid response teams...helping make...North Carolina a better place for serving clients and helping with human trafficking...

The participant perspectives were consistent with the research findings that showed remarkable successes in the development of aftercare services over the course of the NCCASA project.

Remaining gaps in aftercare services. Despite the positive changes that occurred over the project period, participants also acknowledged that significant gaps remained in North Carolina's aftercare service systems. Participants reported that a few critically important service areas remained particularly challenging, including

- a lack of bilingual mental health services;
- insufficient education and job skills training for victims;
- a lack of transportation for victims to access services; and
- insufficient shelter options for victims, including crisis shelter and transitional housing.

Shelter. All participants noted shelter was a critical need. One participant described the challenges with sheltering human trafficking victims in this way: *“There are no trafficking*

shelters, so we end up putting them in a detox centers, and homeless shelters...it just re-traumatizes them [the human trafficking victims]...” Similarly, other participants described the challenges and concerns with sheltering human trafficking victims in North Carolina.

Where can I send them [human trafficking victims] to have good shelter where they feel safe and it's affordable and they get the services they need? Not a domestic violence shelter; they are already over capacity with the domestic violence victims.

[Finding shelter] has been a very traumatic experience for [my clients]... a couple of my clients [had] to be moved from shelter to shelter to shelter because there's literally no other place for them to go. And so [it's a challenge] trying to find something that works and that they can stay in indefinitely, until they have the means to be able to live on their own...

In addition to this general need for trafficking-specific shelters, participants described the nearly absent resources for male victims and families. As one participant stated, *“If it's a male victim; blah! Forget it! That's a whole new set of challenges.”* Similarly, another participant stated, *“We've had a couple of males who were either labor trafficked or sex trafficked, and we've had the most difficult process figuring out where they were actually going go [for housing].”*

Due to limited resources, participants reported that human trafficking victims might be directed to or placed in faith-based facilities with available space, but with few, if any, trained or credentialed staff. Nonetheless, one participant considered this situation an opportunity:

You have an extensive faith-based community who have a lot of energy and enthusiasm...they want to get their hands [into] something, and something constructive... I don't think we as a state have found a real creative and fulfilling way of giving them [the faith-based community] meaningful opportunities to participate in the anti-human trafficking movement...

However, other participants expressed strong apprehensions regarding the quality and types of services human trafficking victims might receive in faith-based shelters. One participant statement typified the perspectives of many: *“You have these [faith-based] groups, and they're*

well-intentioned but...their services come with a message that people may or may not agree with, and that can be traumatizing in itself?"

Case management. Participants universally noted the critical importance of case managers, who are often the first human service providers to meet with victims and coordinate the various service efforts for the victims' near future. Participants remarked on how important case management services are for (a) engaging victims; (b) establishing victims' safety and protection; (c) addressing victims' health and well-being; (d) helping to prepare victims to participate in legal processes, if necessary; and (e) preventing repeated trafficking and re-victimization. One participant stated,

The trauma levels tend to be high with trafficking victims; and there's more defensiveness, more paranoia, less trust...And so we have seen people [trafficking victims] just kind of disappear. I don't know if they've gone back to their traffickers, or they just go off on their own. But we have had — not many but a few — clients, potential clients, disappear before we could really get very far [in the helping process with the trafficking victim]. So I think it's critical to try to meet them [the victims] in person and get a rapport started as soon as possible. Of course, having resources in place does help with that too...to make referrals right away and get a case manager right away makes a difference... Being able to hit the ground running so to speak and get things started right away makes a difference.

Further, at both data collection times, all the participants agreed that the available case managers were providing excellent services based on best practices. However, there was also strong consensus among participants that the state needs more case manager positions and services to address the needs of human trafficking victims in North Carolina.

The case managers we have are making a world of difference, but there's not enough of them because more and more cases are coming in. We definitely need more case managers, especially in other parts of the state [outside of Triangle area].

Need for long-term aftercare services. Several participants noted that the lack of resources, support, and infrastructure for long-term services for human trafficking victims was a significant problem for North Carolina for two reasons. First, participants explained the lengthy

process involved for foreign-born human trafficking victims who are seeking immigration remedies (i.e., the trafficking visa, or the T-visa), noting the application review process can take many years. One participant shared his/her experience with victims applying for a T-visa:

What we've realized it that the waiting process [for a T-Visa] is a whole lot longer than what we had anticipated. When [human trafficking victims] are foreign-born, they can't get a job, they can't have housing. If they do have housing, they don't have food, they don't have transportation...And so we're providing all of that, but we only have a set amount of money to be able to do that. And when it takes two years for them to get a visa, that money runs out quickly.

Participants also described how many human trafficking victims require long-term aftercare services because of the complexity and lasting nature of achieving justice, safety, and immigration remedies. In addition to the lengthy process for securing T-visas, participants stated that years after victims have established safety and might begin to see themselves as *survivors* rather than *victims* of human trafficking they might be asked to participate in legal proceedings, which brings them back to victim status and re-traumatizes the individual. In turn, this re-traumatization might necessitate a new round of aftercare services. Participants also described how the complex, serious needs of foreign-born trafficking victims might mean that these victims need ongoing support and help long after their immigration and legal situations have been successfully resolved.

The problems aren't all patched up and fixed even when [human trafficking victims] get their T-visas and they have status and are working...one client in particular had a really brutal case where she was forced into sex trafficking prostitution. She was beaten very severely; she saw other people murdered, it was really, really bad. She came from a rural place in [location omitted] where she didn't have much of an education. She wasn't literate even in [client's first language]. And so she has just had no earthly concept of how to function here, how to live in the United States. And it's been extraordinarily difficult for her, and we're still struggling to try to figure out how to get her closer to self-sufficiency... We're trying to get case management started again, even though she's already used a lot of resources and has had [legal immigration] status for a while now. She's just still has problem after problem happen; she's just not able to really run her life very well.

Further, one participant described how sex trafficking victims can be repeatedly re-victimized long after she or he has established safety because pornographic photographs or videos of the victim might continue to be available on the Internet. Knowing that such images are widely available can inhibit victims from seeking education, employment, or social connections for fear of embarrassment and stigma. For these reasons, there was strong consensus among participants that long-term services for human trafficking victims were essential, but that North Carolina had serious gaps in developing and providing long-term services.

Criminal Justice and Legal Services

The theme of *criminal justice and legal services* in participant discussions encompassed all facets of the criminal justice and legal systems, including administration, attorneys, detectives, district attorneys, law enforcement officers, and laws against human trafficking and legal remedies for victims. North Carolina strengths identified within the criminal justice and legal services theme included the following

- new statewide policies: “*We have lawmakers talking about Safe Harbor laws¹ ...that’s moved forward*”;
- increased training on human trafficking among law enforcement: “*It’s huge to know law enforcement has that [human trafficking] as part of their basic training, so they have that awareness*”;
- increased awareness of human trafficking in North Carolina within the policymaking system: “*I would say legislative action has been pursued more...to help support victims and increase penalties for traffickers...so that’s a good thing!*”

¹ For information about North Carolina’s recently passed Safe Harbor/Victims of Human Trafficking Act (State Bill 683), please see:
<http://www.ncleg.net/Applications/BillLookup/LoadBillDocument.aspx?SessionCode=2013&DocNum=2742&SeqNum=0>

Although the participants noted the strong aspects of North Carolina criminal justice and legal systems, participants also remarked on the remaining challenges and serious gaps that were evident in these systems at project completion

District attorneys and prosecutions. At project mid-point and project completion, participants were particularly troubled by the lack of attention to human trafficking issues among district attorneys across North Carolina. One participant described this lack of attention as major roadblock for the anti-human trafficking movement in North Carolina, saying, “*I’d say it’s our judicial system that’s holding us up from getting things done.*” Another participant explained the lack of action of North Carolina district attorneys to prosecute trafficking perpetrators in the following way:

Some district attorneys are hesitant to prosecute under the new laws because they’ve never done it before, and so they’re afraid to go there. So, we’re doing a disservice to the victims in that aspect because we’re not charging them [perpetrators] with trafficking... So, I think there needs to be more education for our district attorneys.

Participants described how alleged perpetrators often were charged with lesser crimes and sometimes escaped criminal charges altogether. Participants also expressed that because the perpetrators were not being held accountable for trafficking crimes, these individuals continued to engage in human trafficking, resulting in new crimes and additional victims. Further, participants pointed out that the victims of human trafficking might not ever feel safe until their perpetrators had been held accountable for their crimes. One participant said, “*Having a successful prosecution [is important] so that person [the human trafficking victim] can really feel like you know, ‘This is over!’— you know, ‘I can really move forward.’*” Another participant pointed out that human trafficking victims could not avail themselves of some important legal remedies if their trafficking perpetrators were not prosecuted. “*If there’s no...prosecution of the trafficker, then this person [the human trafficking victim] can’t even get a protective order.*”

Given these gaps in the criminal justice system, participants expressed considerable interest in developing and offering trainings to encourage the prosecution of human trafficking crimes.

Notably, one participant reported evidence from her/his work that the local district attorney's office had shown at least initial interest in prosecuting human trafficking crimes. This participant stated:

We've also seen more prosecutors show interest in the last few years, and that's kind of a change from a few years ago. There was just nothing happening with prosecution, and there was no interest or awareness as far as I could tell. And that's starting to change. It's kind of a trickle; I don't think it's a big shift yet. But we're seeing more prosecutors at the table and...showing interest.

Overall, participants described the challenge of coordinating efforts among all aspects of the criminal justice system within one community, including efforts involving law enforcement, district attorneys, and judges. In particular, participants described the extent of difficulty in trying to simultaneously raise awareness about human trafficking in the community while trying to coordinate efforts among all criminal justice sectors to provide effective response to human trafficking situations. Participants described how it might be possible to make inroads in one part of the system, but not in others. Nevertheless, all parts of the system in a given a community need to be aware of the problem of human trafficking and willing to address the issue in their respective professional roles (e.g., criminal investigation, arrest, prosecution, sentencing) to be able to secure full safety and justice for victims.

Recommendations: Novel Approaches and Next Steps

In addition to these key themes and findings, the research team also sought to document participants' recommendations regarding novel approaches and next steps for addressing human trafficking in North Carolina. Participant recommendations included the following next steps:

- changing legal jurisdictions and developing relationships with relevant federal agencies to allow for legal pursuit of traffickers across jurisdictional boundaries;
- targeting the customer-base of sex traffickers (i.e., johns) to aid in the identification of victims and to reduce the demand for sex trafficking;
- increasing the involvement of survivors of human trafficking in the North Carolina anti-human trafficking movement to ensure that trafficking responses, remedies, and services are victim-centered;
- developing a centralized, comprehensive, confidential, and dedicated human trafficking agency with the capacity to serve all of North Carolina by providing training, outreach, and inclusive services for victims of human trafficking;
- documenting and standardizing promising practices in human trafficking aftercare; and
- collecting data on the prevalence and incidence of human trafficking in North Carolina.

The participant discussions of each recommendation are detailed below.

Changes to jurisdiction. Some participants noted that having law enforcement personnel with statewide jurisdiction would be tremendously helpful in pursuing human trafficking perpetrators. One participant stated, “*As it is, if [the trafficker] finds out he’s being watched, he can move the whole operation to the next county over...where [the law enforcement pursuing him] doesn’t have jurisdiction.*” Networking with federal agents was discussed as a potential solution to this jurisdictional problem, and some participants discussed relationships they had already formed with federal agents. One participant described the potential benefits of such a

relationship in this way: *“The FBI connection is very promising. So if that works well, then we’ll have some statewide jurisdiction, at least on their part...”*

Target johns and demand for prostitution. A few participants expressed that a valuable strategy for reducing sex trafficking demand and helping to identify sex trafficking victims might include targeting the customer base of sex traffickers, which is primarily adult males who use prostitution services (i.e., “johns”). Two participant statements described how this novel strategy might work:

We work with a lot of adult males who do patronize the commercial sex industry who don’t know about trafficking, and will call and say, “I don’t know, this sounds wrong. There are these young girls...They’re bringing around really young girls this time and they seem really scared, what can we do about that?”

It would be great to have designated people working on the prevention side using social media, doing outreach...to get the message out and effecting the culture and then the ignorance about what really goes on in brothels...I think there are some people who don’t care what goes on and would patronize brothels [regardless]. But there’s also a lot of “johns” who would stop and would even try to rescue people or bring it to law enforcement if they knew the extent of things that go on.

In sum, a few participants expressed the opinion that awareness campaigns (e.g., using print, radio, social media, television) targeted at men who use prostitution services could help to increase the identification of human trafficking victims and might help to reduce the demand for sex trafficking.

Increasing survivors’ involvement in the North Carolina anti-human trafficking movement. Many participants strongly recommended that the North Carolina anti-trafficking movement do more to involve survivors of human trafficking in the development and evaluation of identification strategies, aftercare services, and immigration and legal remedies. One participant described how helpful it was to have a group of survivors of human trafficking at a recent meeting that she attended:

*[The survivors] were there as advocates. They were there to help us figure out when we [service providers and professionals] could have done differently, what things we should be doing, and where they'd like to see us going because they had been there and they lived it and understanding that survivor leadership is important. ...Instead of just saying "Oh, well, you're just a survivor" or "You're just a victim so we don't have to listen to you." No, that's **who** you should be listening to."*

Centralized, comprehensive, dedicated human trafficking agency. At both data points, most participants expressed the need for a centralized, comprehensive agency dedicated to human trafficking with the capacity to provide holistic services for all types of trafficking survivors, including adults and children, sex and labor trafficking, foreign-born and domestic victims, and male and female victims. Participants described such an agency in terms of best practices, with crisis and transitional housing, healthcare, job and skills training, legal services and mental health services, all in a secure, confidential setting. Further, participants also noted that this type of agency could provide outreach and case management services to human trafficking victims across the state.

Need to document and standardize promising practices. Some participants noted the importance of North Carolina working to document and standardize promising practices to ensure quality, helpful aftercare services for human trafficking victims statewide. Participants acknowledged that communities and organizations would need to tailor such services to individuals. Nonetheless, these participants described the critical need for statewide, best practice service protocols. Typical participant comments expressing such viewpoints follow:

With domestic violence [services]...there's this set of standard protocols on how to do [that work], and there's nothing like that for human trafficking. So the agencies are doing what they can...but what they want to do, sometimes might not be in the best interest of the victim or the community.

Each practice looks very different depending on who you talk to so, like what are best practices for case management when you're working on a very individual basis and case by case situation. But yet [we need] to have something, some standard across the board, "This is what [best practice services] look like and this is what's expected."

Overall, these participants declared that the development of statewide, standardized best practices for human trafficking aftercare services was a necessary and important step toward the development of North Carolina capacity to respond to human trafficking victims effectively and helpfully.

Documenting the prevalence and incidence of human trafficking in North Carolina.

Nearly universally, participants expressed the critical importance of North Carolina collecting comprehensive and systematic data about the prevalence and incidence of human trafficking, including information about the various types of trafficking (i.e., labor and sex), as well as the various victim types (e.g., adults, children, domestic, foreign-born, country of origin, and gender). As one participant stated, *“I think that would be a really big thing for North Carolina to actually have stats and data to share for funding, and also just so that people really know that this is a real issue in North Carolina.”* Several participants noted that without such data, it is challenging to make a strong case for resources and funding to address the problem of human trafficking.

DISCUSSION

This evaluative, exploratory mid- and post-test qualitative research study of the NCCASA-led and OVC-funded project to develop a statewide infrastructure with the capacity to provide comprehensive services for pre-certified foreign national victims of human trafficking identified five key themes:

- limitations of current awareness and infrastructure;
- need for consistent, sustained funding;
- need for improved communication and collaboration among anti-human trafficking organizations and agencies
- improved availability and delivery of aftercare services to victims of human trafficking; and
- need for victim-centered criminal justice and legal services.

Notably, the research findings showed significant interrelationships among the five themes that can best be described as a kind of “chicken-or-egg” association. In particular, the findings showed the extent of how critically important statewide awareness and a statewide infrastructure are for responding to human trafficking in North Carolina. This research suggests that increasing the awareness about human trafficking among professionals, service providers, and the public not only facilitates the identification of human trafficking but also improves the effectiveness of responses to victims through availability of high-quality aftercare and legal services. Moreover, greater widespread awareness of human trafficking will facilitate appropriate and swift justice responses to human trafficking crimes. Similarly, increase awareness helps to generate funding for anti-human trafficking trainings, aftercare services, legal services, and criminal justice

capacity to respond to human trafficking crimes. Thus, greater awareness and funding are both essential factors for the development of a robust, widely available human trafficking response infrastructure in North Carolina.

The findings also suggest the development of human trafficking training programs, aftercare services, legal services, and criminal justice capacity can likewise help build awareness and lead to additional funding. Accordingly, the findings suggest that seed funding and investment in initial resource development can lead to the further development of statewide human trafficking response capacity. For these reasons, and as the participants attested during this study, the NCCASA-led and the OVC-funded multi-year project to develop statewide infrastructure for comprehensive services for pre-certified foreign national victims of human trafficking showed many important successes.

Project successes. Specific project successes identified as part of this research included

- greater level of public awareness of human trafficking
- development and implementation of high-quality case management services
- successful implementation of anti-human trafficking training for all entry-level law enforcement officers throughout the state
- improved interagency communication and collaboration

A further accomplishment is the statewide effort to implement introductory human trafficking training for professionals and service providers, so that these professionals and service providers are now ready for advanced training. That growing pool of professionals and service providers with training and expertise in the area of human trafficking is a considerable and important asset for North Carolina.

Moreover, the research showed that by the end of the project, participants were developing long-term plans, finding creative solutions, and inventing novel strategies for advancing and growing North Carolina's capacity to respond to human trafficking. Participant recommendations for future actions included,

- changing legal jurisdictions and developing relationships with relevant federal agencies to allow for legal pursuit of traffickers across jurisdictional boundaries;
- targeting the customer-base of sex traffickers (i.e., johns) to aid in the identification of victims and to reduce the demand for sex trafficking;
- increasing the involvement of survivors of human trafficking in the North Carolina anti-human trafficking movement to ensure that trafficking responses, remedies, and services are victim-centered;
- developing a centralized, comprehensive, confidential, and dedicated human trafficking agency with the capacity to serve all of North Carolina by providing training, outreach, and inclusive services for victims of human trafficking;
- documenting and standardizing promising practices in human trafficking aftercare; and
- collecting data on the prevalence and incidence of human trafficking in North Carolina.

Ongoing challenges. Notwithstanding the project successes, the findings also showed that significant challenges remained. Critical, perplexing issues facing North Carolina's anti-human trafficking movement include the following challenges:

- Building and enhancing positive interagency and interdisciplinary communication and collaboration among all organizations working to address and respond to the problem of human trafficking in North Carolina.
- Encouraging and enabling efforts to prosecute the perpetrators of human trafficking to help ensure justice and safety for victims, as well as to prevent future trafficking crimes and victims.
- Filling critical gaps in short-term aftercare service delivery system, including a statewide system to provide case management services; bilingual and culturally relevant mental health services; shelter and transitional housing for victims; and services for both female and male victims of human trafficking.
- Developing statewide aftercare service system to address the long-term, ongoing needs of human trafficking victims.
- Facilitating timely, helpful immigration remedies for foreign-born victims of human trafficking.
- Developing strategies to address and respond to human trafficking in the rural parts of the state and in North Carolina's smaller communities.

Equally important, at the time this report was prepared efforts were underway to address aspects of these issues. For example, the North Carolina Governor's Crime Commission had funded a part-time position at NCCASA to help organize communication, events, meetings, and networking opportunities to facilitate interagency communication and relationships. (Fryer, n.d.)

Crosscutting issues. The evaluation findings also pointed to two significant issues that cut across several of the five key themes identified by this research.

1. The research showed tensions exist between the North Carolina secular, professionalized services sectors (i.e., criminal justice, health services, human services, and legal services) and the North Carolina faith-based, grassroots, anti-human trafficking movement. On the one hand, many research participants expressed respect and gratitude these faith-based organizations, particularly regarding the energy and enthusiasm that these organizations brought to the state in terms of raising awareness, fund raising, and volunteerism. On the other hand, many research participants expressed concern the well-intentioned but uninformed efforts of such organizations stood as a real threat to the safety and effective care of victims. Further, participants expressed concern that as grassroots organizations or zealous individuals began to provide direct services to victims and become involved in advocacy and policymaking, their lack of training and credentials might undermine similar efforts based on best practices, hard-won experience in the field, and the best available evidence. Without clear solutions or strategies to address such tensions, this issue is likely to continue to confound North Carolina's statewide efforts to address human trafficking. Accordingly, it is worth underscoring one participant's recommendation that those working in North Carolina professionalized services sectors find *“creative and fulfilling way of giving them [the faith-based community] meaningful opportunities to participant in the anti-human trafficking movement.”*

2. Second, even though this project and research was focused on pre-certified, foreign-born victims of human trafficking, most of the participants' discussions and the research findings were related to the general issue of human trafficking in North Carolina, and inclusive of domestic and foreign trafficking, labor and sex trafficking, and adult and child trafficking.

In addition, participants discussed the overlap of victim types. For example, an adult human trafficking victim might have been initially trafficked as a child. Labor trafficking victims

can also experience sexually violent victimization during trafficking. Given these overlaps, most North Carolina organizations appear to be working to address human trafficking in comprehensive ways. In turn, understanding that efforts to respond to human trafficking in North Carolina are broad and comprehensive can be valuable information for funders of human trafficking services and initiatives. Funders might wish to develop specific requests for proposals to target underserved and neglected groups of human trafficking victims (e.g., adult sex trafficking victims, labor trafficking victims, male victims of all types). Nonetheless, current North Carolina efforts are focused on developing capacity to respond to human trafficking broadly and comprehensively, whatever the victim type. Given the nascent state of the North Carolina anti-human trafficking response system, such broad-based strategies appear well reasoned. Organizations likely need to develop their overall capacity to respond to human trafficking before trying to specialize their efforts into specific human trafficking subtypes. Accordingly, funders might be better served by supporting broad-based human trafficking response strategies, at least until statewide capacity is further developed.

Given the broad focus of the qualitative data gathered in this study, the research findings from this project evaluation should be valuable for informing North Carolina efforts to address and respond to all types of human trafficking.

Research limitations. In considering the research results and their implications, we encourage readers to be mindful of the study limitations. First, the results of this research are based on a small sample consisting of 2 interviews and 9 focus groups with 14 participants. Nonetheless, this research was intended to be exploratory in nature and focused on evaluating the NCCASA-led and OVC-funded collaborative project. Among the five partner organizations in this collaborative project, representatives from all five organizations participated in both data

collection points. Further, these five organizations represent the forefront of the anti-human trafficking movement in North Carolina (Fryer, n.d.; Sullivan, 2010). Thus, the data collection in this study represents the shared viewpoints and collective wisdom of the key actors and organizations in North Carolina's efforts to address and respond to human trafficking.

The protection of research participants' confidentiality in the evaluation was essential given that the group of people working on the issues of human trafficking in North Carolina is small and that they are all well-known to one another as well as well-known to others in North Carolina (e.g., funders, policymakers, state leaders). To reduce the possibility of deductive disclosure of participants' identities, as well as to increase participants' comfort to speak frankly, we collected and reported limited participant demographic data. Although additional details about participant characteristics might have enhanced the findings, we chose to restrict our reporting of participants' characteristics to protect the research participants' confidentiality.

Even though efforts were made to ensure and assure participants of study confidentiality, it is possible that some participants felt they could not be fully honest in their responses. It is also possible that other important findings were not elicited because we failed to include relevant questions in our interview guides. However, we made efforts to address this limitation by (a) using open-ended questions; (b) offering participants the opportunity to participate in individual interviews rather than focus groups; (c) offering participants in the focus groups and interviews the opportunity to discuss any topic related to human trafficking in North Carolina regardless of whether their points were related to the study questions; and (d) seeking disconfirming cases during analysis.

Given the qualitative study design, conclusions cannot be drawn about whether the NCCASA-led project specifically enabled changes in statewide human trafficking response

capacity. As described in this report, there are many ongoing statewide efforts to address human trafficking in North Carolina (Fryer, n.d.; Jayson, 2013; Sullivan, 2010). For example in 2011 and at the same time as the NCCASA-led project, The North Carolina Justice Academy in collaboration with NCCAHT developed anti-human trafficking training materials for North Carolina law enforcement personnel (Fryer, n.d.). These training materials were subsequently adopted by the North Carolina Training and Standards Commission and used to train law enforcement personnel widely throughout the state. Accordingly, it is possible that the positive outcomes described in this report are the result of one of these other efforts or the combination of all such efforts rather than the result of only the NCCASA-led project. Likewise, these other efforts or their combination, might have led to or exacerbated the challenges described in this report.

Nonetheless, a clear strength of this research was that data collection occurred at two time points 12-months apart to enable an assessment of dynamic changes in the statewide capacity to respond to human trafficking over the course of the project. We note here that most of the participants (9 of 14; 64.3%) participated in both waves of data collection, allowing those participants to reflect on changes related to NCCASA's project.

In considering the results of this research, we also would like readers to be mindful of certain aspects of the nature of the organizations involved in the NCCASA project task force and this research. First, as a statewide networking resource of collaborating individuals and agencies in anti-trafficking initiatives and efforts, NCCAHT is both a singular entity and an umbrella association for all persons and organizations interested in the anti-human trafficking movement in North Carolina. Accordingly, there was overlap among the personnel and organizations between NCCAHT and the other organization that participated in this research. Second, and as

noted throughout the report, all the organizations involved in this project are dynamically changing because of the nascent nature of the anti-human trafficking movement in North Carolina. Accordingly, the results of this research provide a detailed analysis of the dynamic operations and relationships among these organizations over the course of this project. However, these organizations will continue to adapt, change and grow with shifts in funding, personnel as well as the anti-human trafficking environmental context in North Carolina and beyond. Thus, the findings about these organizations and their relationships to one another may have limited relevance in the future.

Conclusion

Despite the study limitations, the results of this evaluation research provide valuable information and lessons-learned from this multi-year project to respond to human trafficking in North Carolina. Specifically, the research findings highlight critical statewide gaps and needs, which in turn, provide a helpful roadmap for North Carolina's ongoing and future efforts to address human trafficking. In addition, the research findings highlight the accomplishments and successes of the nascent but growing anti-human trafficking movement in North Carolina. Accordingly, our research team hopes that findings from this evaluation provide valuable information for sustaining and advancing human trafficking responses in North Carolina.

Moreover, the development of anti-trafficking infrastructure and services for trafficking victims is just beginning in the United States. Consequently, little research evidence is available on human trafficking, including best practices to address the problem of human trafficking (Clawson et al., 2009; Kaufman & Crawford, 2011). Even less evidence is available about the development of anti-human trafficking capacity and infrastructure in rural areas of the United States. North Carolina's small communities and rural areas have been especially challenged in

their efforts to address human trafficking (Fryer, n.d.; Sullivan, 2010). Accordingly, this research makes a unique contribute to the existing literature by developing findings and recommendations that pertain to anti-trafficking efforts that are relevant for rural locations.

Therefore, it is also our research team's hope that this rigorous qualitative program evaluation of NCCASA's statewide anti-trafficking project will provide important information to inform future work and research across North Carolina as well as the United States. Human trafficking is a complex, daunting problem for North Carolina, the United States, and the global community. Such a complicated issue requires creative, dedicated, and thoughtful work, as well as rigorous evaluation and research to assess the progress and benefits of such efforts. Although the challenge of human trafficking will not be easily addressed because of its complexity, the horrors and human toll of this problem require our best and continued efforts in North Carolina and beyond.

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